Today's event: Migration Seminar "Daring to aspire: Violence, life aspirations and displacement trajectories in civil war contexts"

Expéditeur : UNU-MERIT Event Announcements (webmaster@merit.unu.edu)

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UNU-MERIT EVENT ANNOUNCEMENT

United Nations University - Maastricht Economic and social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology

Title:	**Migration Seminar "Daring to aspire: Violence, life aspirations and displacement trajectories in civil war contexts"**
Speaker:	Dr. Lea MÃ¼ller-Funk
Institute:	Department of Migration and Globalisation at Danube University Krems
Date:	Dec 14, 2022
Time:	14:00 - 15:00
Venue:	Online (Zoom): https://unu-merit-eu.zoom.us/j/86879554903?pwd=djNSRGx2VEx1ajZBeS96c29UbzhUUT09
Type:	Migration seminar

Abstract

While it is widely acknowledged that conflict is one of the main determinants of forced migration, existing studies fail to explain why not all people exposed to violence flee. It remains rather unclear (i) how displacement journeys are undertaken across internal and external borders, (ii) how the subjective experience of violence influences migration-decision making in displacement contexts, and (iii) how these experiences interact with other factors, including life aspirations. Drawing on empirical data from the civil wars in Syria and Libya since 2011 the talk seeks to build a better understanding of (im)mobilities in civil war settings. I will first reflect conceptually on aspirations in contexts of displacement by asking what they do to aspirations and capabilities. Binary distinctions between refugees and economic migrants keep prevailing in humanitarian discourse, with recent international agreements and much literature on refugees' experiences hea vily focusing on their vulnerabilities and reduced choices. As a result, aspirations – arguably one of the most evident manifestation of agency – of displaced people are often under investigated. The talk then demonstrates that different types of violent experiences—personal threats, generalized violence, an increasing hopelessness relating to the absence of violence in the future—trigger different exit movements across internal and external borders. Second, the analysis shows that migration decisions in civil war contexts are complex processes with people balancing between strategies of how to avoid violence with strategies of how to realize broader life aspirations related to love, work, and political change. Life aspirations often play a more important role once people move out of a situation of immediate danger and in later phases of flight trajectories. Life aspirations also outweigh perceptions of violence in some cases. The analysis is based on 91 qual itative interviews with Syrians and Libyans living in different parts of Syria, Lebanon, Libya, and Tunisia conducted between 2018 and 2021.

About the speaker

After postdocs at the Universities of Oxford and Amsterdam and the German Institute for Global and Area Studies, Lea Müller-Funk is currently a senior researcher and Principal Investigator at the Department of Migration and Globalisation at Danube University Krems. Her work focuses on diaspora politics, migration processes in displacement contexts, as well as migration governance with a geographical focus on the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe. Lea Müller-Funk holds a joint PhD degree in Comparative Politics and Arabic Studies from Sciences Po Paris and Vienna University.

She has led and been involved in various research projects on displacement (Marie Curie: SYRMAGINE (Syrian Imagination of Europe, 2017-2019), Horizon2020: MAGYC (Migration Governance and Asylum Crises, 2019-2021), FWF: SYREALITY (Syrian Imagination of Europe meet Reality, 2022-2026). Her current research project SYREALITY focuses on drivers of (im)mobility and migration decision-making proc esses of Syrian refugees in the Middle East and Europe. It investigates how broader life aspirations influence refugees' migration decisions; which influence war and displacement have on life aspirations and social class; and how forced migrants' legal status and the context of reception in four different European cities impact their life aspirations and well-being.

Please note that this seminar will be recorded. You can find the previous Migration Seminars at UNU-MERIT's Youtube Channel.

For further information, please contact Laura Cleton (convenor of the seminar series, on behalf of UNU-MERIT & MACIMIDE): laura.cleton@maastrichtuniversity.nl

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